actual trip lengths in minutes, and the comparative savings in minutes. That information is buried in the document's last appendix.

B. Achieving Transportation and Land Use Planning Goals.

Section 3.4.2 discusses the alternatives' consistency with both local and regional land use planning goals. Both discussions are unilluminating.

With respect to local land use planning goals, the tollroad is justified by a circular argument: It is the most consistent with local land use plans, since local land use plans were constructed around the tollroad after decades of IDOT telling local governments that the road would be built. Moreover, the poll of local elected officials was not informative. The alternatives presented to them were essentially three different versions of the same roadway. The fact that the mayors picked the faster version of the roadway over slower versions is not surprising. The results do not tell the readers how the mayors would have reacted to a genuine alternative like the Action Plan. If offered a plan that would greatly improve local roadways in and around their towns, would they still have preferred a tollway? The SFEIS offers no basis to answer that question.

With respect to consistency with regional land use objectives, the Action Plan would appear to score far higher that a tollroad if it were added to the mix. In terms of the criteria listed at the top of page 3-24, the Action Plan (1) better encourages development in existing communities by creating a more robust transportation infrastructure in those communities; (2) better encourages development in areas served by existing infrastructure, by contrast to a tollroad that would be built entirely in open space and require an entirely new road, sewer and utility infrastructure to service nearby development; and (3) better protects environmentally sensitive areas by concentrating development closer to existing communities and avoiding the displacements of wetlands and intrusion upon forest preserves that the tollroad would cause.

Moreover, the tollroad alternative, as discussed in the comments of Norman L. Marshall, would result in an intensification of the jobs/housing imbalance in Will County and the region generally. The SFEIS envisions the tollroad attracting additional residents to the project corridor, who would then face commutes of 90-120 minutes each way to identified suburban job centers. This is hardly a scenario consonant with NIPC's overall vision for the region.

C. Regional Mobility Analysis

3.24 The regional mobility analysis in Section 3.4.3 is abstract and unhelpful. The primary measure used to compare the alternatives is a measure of the number of travel analysis zones region-wide to which travel times would be reduced. This measure is meaningless without some analysis and explanation of where residents of the area currently travel. Are the zones that residents could reach more quickly the zones to which they normally travel? Is it possible that the tollroad alternative eases travel to places where residents travel less frequently, and provides no benefits or even makes travel more difficult to zones to which

residents frequently travel? It may be that an alternative which eases travel to fewer zones would actually be more beneficial, because it may help more trips that residents actually take.

The "system continuity" and "safety" arguments are likewise unhelpful. They are based on the premise that expressway travel is always safer and faster. Taken to their extremes, they suggest that no one should ever travel on any type of road except for an expressway.

D. Local System Deficiency Analysis

3.25 Section 3.4.4 is likewise constructed around an unhelpful measure: which alternative leads to the lowest total travel time in the corridor. Using this measure, faster north-south trips on the tollroad may mask the fact that east-west trips and other local trips are actually slower and more difficult in a tollroad scenario. Moreover, it is not clear that this analysis is based strictly on local trips, or whether portions of longer regional trips are also included in the data. A more helpful analysis would focus on door-to-door travel times for representative local trips, both east-west and north-south, to determine the extent to which a given alternative aids local travel.

3.26 This analysis is also skewed by the failure of the SFEIS to account for all of the additional local traffic that would be caused by the tollroad, particularly on east-west streets. The comments of Norman L. Marshall explain how the travel demand models used to analyze the alternatives produced counterintuitive and even unsupportable results, such as estimating that total miles of vehicle travel would actually be lower with a tollroad than without.

That strange result is inconsistent with the assertions in the SFEIS that the proposed tollroad would cause more development to focus and concentrate in the tollroad corridor. (See, e.g., SFEIS at 1-7 and 1-8). Similarly, the SFEIS fails to account for the massive traffic impacts predicted by New Lenox as a result of its development plan for the interchanges where the proposed tollroad meets US 6 and I-80. New Lenox estimates that 192,000 cars per day will move through this area (See Attachment G). The estimated traffic volumes in the SFEIS, however, do not come close to matching those estimates. (See Exhibit 3-5).

IV. IDOT'S FAILURE TO ANALYZE THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF ALTERNATIVES VIOLATES NEPA

A. NEPA Mandates That An EIS Include A Comparative Analysis Of The Environmental Impacts Of The Alternatives

3.27 NEPA requires that agencies consider all reasonable alternatives in depth. Simmons v. United States Army Corps of Engineers, 120 F.3d 664, 670 (7th Cir. 1997). As the Seventh Circuit has stated, "If NEPA mandates anything, it mandates this: a federal agency cannot ram through a project before first weighing the pros and cons of the alternatives." Id. Because decisionmakers and the public cannot evaluate and compare the benefits and detriments of alternatives without an understanding of the environmental impacts of each of them, NEPA dictates that an agency must study and describe the environmental impacts of the alternatives

as part of the EIS process. The NEPA regulations promulgated by the Council on Environmental Quality set forth explicit guidance for agencies concerning the analysis of environmental impacts that must be presented in an EIS. The regulations governing the analysis of alternatives specifically provide:

> This section is the heart of the environmental impact statement. … [I]t should *present the environmental impacts of the proposal and the alternatives in comparative form*, thus sharply defining the issues and providing a clear basis for choice among options by the decisionmaker and the public. In this section agencies shall:
> (b) Devote substantial treatment to each alternative considered in detail including the proposed action so that reviewers may evaluate their comparative merits.

40 C.F.R. § 1502.14 (emphasis added). The regulations further state that the discussion in the EIS of environmental consequences "will include the environmental impacts of the alternatives including the proposed action." 40 C.F.R. § 1502.16 and 1502.16(d). The examination of environmental consequences is a critical portion of the EIS because it "forms the scientific and analytic basis for the comparisons" of alternatives required as part of the document. Id. As these regulations make clear, a valid EIS must include a study of the environmental impacts of all of the alternatives that is then used to provide citizens and public officials with a means of judging the merits of the alternatives. Indeed, most members of the general public undoubtedly view such a comparative environmental analysis as the primary function of an EIS. Unfortunately, such an analysis is completely absent form the SFEIS.

B. The SFEIS Fails To Study And Compare The Environmental Impacts Of IDOT's Alternatives

3.28 In the Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences sections of the SFEIS
3.17 (sections 2.0 and 4.0), IDOT considers only the impacts of its Preferred Alternative, the I-355 South extension. For example, IDOT limits the examination of wetlands impacts to sites "within or near a 305 meter (1,000 foot) wide corridor approximately following the proposed centerline of the I-355 South Extension." (SFEIS at 2-22 and 2-25.) The SFEIS takes the same constrained approach to the study of all of the natural resources reviewed in the study, including vegetation and cover types, and threatened and endangered species. (SFEIS at 2-31 to 2-32.) Similarly, IDOT considers only the economic impacts of I-355 South, offering no basis for a comparison of the impacts of multiple alternatives on the local and regional economies. Throughout the SFEIS, IDOT never addresses any of the environmental impacts of its Mass Transit, Lemont Bypass or Enhanced Arterial Alternatives. Consequently, federal and state agencies, decisionmakers and citizens reading the SFEIS are provided with no basis for understanding the tradeoffs inherent in choosing one alternative over the other. Instead, IDOT treats the environmental impact sections of the EIS as nothing more than a cursory review of the impacts that will result from its chosen alternative.

4.14 The environmental impacts of the proposed alternatives are undoubtedly quite different. In
4.21 particular, the Enhanced Arterial Alternative relies on existing bridges across the Des Plaines River Valley and completely avoids the massive structure that would bisect the forest preserves north of the river and their associated salt spray and runoff. This failure to provide a comparable environmental analysis is a fundamental flaw in the SFEIS.

IDOT's failure to consider and compare the environmental impacts of alternatives is particularly troubling in this case due to the significant impact of the tollroad on the most environmentally sensitive areas in the Project corridor. Sections 2.0 and 4.0 of the SFEIS (and the references back to these sections in the 1996 FEIS) make clear that the most sensitive and important natural resources in the Project corridor are found in and near the Des Plaines River Valley. (See SFEIS at 2-31 and references to the 1996 FEIS.) Likewise, many of the most valuable visual resources involve the Des Plaines River Valley. (See 1996 FEIS, Section 2.16.) Despite this fact, IDOT crafted only one roadway alternative that avoids dramatically impact this area but then failed to conduct an analysis of the different environmental impacts caused by this alternative and the tollroad. IDOT's wholly inadequate treatment of the environmental consequences of this project leaves federal and state agencies, decisionmakers and citizens reviewing the SFEIS without the information that forms the core of the EIS: a rigorous analysis of all reasonable alternatives. 40 C.F.R. § 1502.14(a).

C. IDOT Inappropriately Minimizes The Extent OF The Environmental And Societal Impacts Resulting From The I-355 South Extension

4.4 Throughout its limited discussion of environmental consequences, IDOT seeks to minimize the significant negative impacts of I-355 South. For example, the SFEIS minimizes the impacts of the I-355 South extension on wetlands and water resources. In particular, the
4.17 SFEIS fails to discuss the fact that this highway would cross 9 streams and their tributaries (SFEIS at 4-7; 1996 FEIS, Section 4.10.2), directly and permanently impact 18 wetlands (SFEIS at 4-11), and affect Black Partridge Creek. The impacts on Black Partridge Creek are important because, according to IDOT this creek is "unique within the Project corridor because it is supplied by numerous natural springs and has the characteristics of a cool, clear stream." (SFEIS at 4-8.) Each of these impacts is worthy of more detailed consideration and an assessment of whether they can be avoided by a reasonable alternative.

The SFEIS also plays down the impact of the I-355 South extension on the Hine's emerald dragonfly. Although IDOT concludes that the road will not impact this dragonfly, the proposed action falls within the Southern Recovery Unit for the species and that unit contains populations of the dragonfly. Moreover, the Keepataw Forest Preserve contains a smaller population of this dragonfly and, according to Recovery Plan, "these smaller sites may serve as recruitment sources for the larger subpopulations and are considered important for the maintenance of the species." (SFEIS at 2-32.) The I-355 South extension crosses Keepataw Forest Preserve where adult Hines's emerald dragonflies and larvae are found.

Finally, IDOT's analysis of present and future land use in the area overlooks key facts. Specifically, IDOT states that no substantive change to public facilities has occurred. (SFEIS at 4-1.) This statement ignores the opening of the Old Quarry Middle School in Lemont at 16100 W. 127th Street. This school opened in the Fall of 1997 and serves sixth to eighth grade students. The school is located less than one mile east of the planned 127th Street interchange for the I-355 South extension. IDOT's maps show traffic from the interchange emptying out just west of the school. Moreover, the school is located immediately to the west of the Centennial Community Center, 16020 W. 127th Street, which offers numerous year-

NEXT PAGE